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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: poverty eradication

Statement submitted by Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2011/1.

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Statement*

Introduction

1. One of the resolutions adopted at the forty-eighth session of the Commission for Social Development, on the theme "Social integration", contains many important principles and policy recommendations that, when implemented, will make a significant difference in the lives of people living in poverty.

2. In 2010, the Non-Governmental Organizations Committee for Social Development, in collaboration with the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service, conducted a survey to determine what level of awareness existed in the non-governmental organizations community concerning the resolution and what new programmes had been initiated in response to the policy recommendations.

3. The survey elicited 180 responses from 60 countries: from the region of the Economic Commission for Africa (48 responses from 20 countries); from the region of the Economic Commission for Europe (51 responses from 11 countries); from the region of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (26 responses from 13 countries); from the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (50 responses from 13 countries); and from the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (5 responses from 3 countries).

4. Awareness of the resolution among the respondents varied from "very aware" (30 countries) to "not at all aware" (20 countries). For the majority of the respondents, there were only "some" (67) or "very little" (53) awareness. The survey indicates that a significant number of programmes have been initiated in each of the specified areas. An even larger number of development policies promoting gender equality and the elimination of discrimination, abuse and violence have been initiated.

5. New programmes were addressed by countries in the following areas:

- *Responses to the basic needs of people living in poverty*: sanitation (75), water (103), nutrition (84), education (39), employment (66) and health services (125).
- *Effective participation of the people*: in civic activities (98), social (120), economic (84) and political life (83).
- *Universal access to social protection for*: workers in the formal sector (111), workers in the informal sector (55), the unemployed including persons with disabilities, the sick and the elderly (84).
- *Development policies promoting gender equality*: women have equal access to employment opportunities (117), women are compensated for their work in the informal sector (64), women have the right to inheritance (107), women have the right to own property (122), new policies to eliminate discrimination (99), to protect against physical/sexual violence (112), to protect against domestic violence (112) and women have equal access to decision-making positions in governments (91).

* Issued without formal editing.

Concrete implementation recommendations

6. Several major themes emerged in response to the open-ended question: "What one or two concrete suggestions do you have for the implementation of the policy recommendations during the coming year?".

Enforcing existing laws and policies

7. Many good policies exist. In many cases, however, policies are on paper but are not implemented. For implementation to be effective, it must be supported by a strong commitment by the Government and at the grass-roots level and it must be continuous.

Enhancing participation by civil society and grass roots

8. Knowledge of policies and access to their benefits must be widely and easily accessible. Citizens should be at the heart of any process, from the planning and design stages through its implementation and its monitoring to its evaluation. Participation of community members, especially those members who are most vulnerable, is imperative so that people can be agents of their own development and sustainable solutions to urgent problems can be implemented.

9. It would be especially useful if equal partnerships for meaningful participation between Government officials and civil society were established to provide a framework for exchange of information, planning and implementation of policies and programmes.

Ensuring access to information

10. A dominant theme that surfaced repeatedly was that so much needed to be done in the areas of poverty eradication, people participation, gender equality, the elimination of discrimination, abuse and violence. It was crucial that the contents of the resolution be brought to the attention of more people through mass media, and through new media such as social networking websites like Facebook and Twitter.

11. Information should be made available to those who do not have easy access to information, such as prisoners, people living in remote areas, and those who do not attend school. Modern communication technology, distance learning education, grass-roots education, use of newspapers, television, and press conferences are all useful means of communication. This information should be promulgated in schools, lycées and in professional training centres. Only informed citizens can monitor the implementation of government commitments and hold them accountable.

12. People need to be informed that a resolution exists, that Governments have committed to improving the conditions of their citizens, and that all citizens have a right to health, education, decent housing, and job opportunities.

Eliminating corruption

13. The level of corruption has reached alarming proportions, even at the highest State levels. Strict monitoring of Governments is needed to ensure that money set aside for the completion of the Millennium Development Goals be stringently followed and corruption be sternly dealt with. Funds received should be audited so

that they benefit the most vulnerable people. It is important that all fight earnestly and sincerely against corruption and administrative apathy in implementing these laws. Governments must have the political will to stamp out corruption and seek the effective participation of the powerful and the rich who have both resources and expertise to help their country.

Continuing to focus on women's equality

14. Governments are urged to legislate for gender equity in education and for legal rights to inheritance and land-ownership. Access to decent work and to positions of leadership and decision-making positions are very limited in many countries. Protection against discrimination, physical and sexual violence, and provision for health-care services for women infected with HIV/AIDS are other areas that need urgent attention.

Addressing needs of migrants/immigrants/refugees

15. Immigration is a pressing problem of our time and can only be managed to the extent that Governments provide indispensable safe living conditions conducive to human development, assuring health services, education, social services and opportunities for decent work for citizens and non-citizens alike. There is urgent need for immigration reform. Protection of foreign workers from exploitation and specific programmes that facilitate social inclusion of foreigners and minorities are urgently needed.

Focusing of the most vulnerable in providing basic needs and services

16. The gap between the rich and poor is ever widening. Resources should be distributed based on people's needs, with particular attention given to vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, prisoners, the elderly and people living with mental illness. Governments need to be held accountable. Education, formation and skill-building for young people, especially girls, and for people living in rural areas are recurring themes in the recommendations.

Increasing efforts to address societal divisions (caste, race, religion)

17. Survey respondents stated that all divisions based on caste, creed, religion, gender, or language must be eliminated from all spheres of society so as to effectively execute existing policies. It is these prejudices which divide societies and deter the implementation of policies.

18. Social inclusion will be enhanced by eliminating development policies and practices based on ethnic, religious and political discrimination. The terms "minority" and "majority" based on religion and ethnicity should be abolished.

Putting in place a monitoring mechanism

19. A number of respondents reiterated the need to have a transparent mechanism put in place at local, national and international levels to monitor the effective implementation of policies by all stakeholders including civil society.

20. Governments are to be commended for the programmes and policies that have been documented in the survey. The recommendations from the grass roots are a plea to continue to respond to the needs of people living in poverty. A group of 10

children from Africa who responded to the survey stated that they wanted the Government to provide maternal health because they didn't want their mothers to die in childbirth.

Note: Statement also endorsed by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Council: Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Dominican Leadership Conference, International Association of Schools of Social Work, International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Salesian Missions, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, UNANIMA International and Vivat International.